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SUBJECT: KUWAIT MEDIA REACTION SPECIAL, JULY 8-9: NATIONAL  
ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS IN KUWAIT.

SUMMARY: Opinion in Kuwait's media on how to characterize the results of the parliamentary elections remains divided. Some liberal commentators believe that Islamists now have the upper hand, a notion that the bulk of editorial opinion (and most post media contacts) dismiss as a fundamental misreading of the situation. All newspapers prominently report Islamist appeals for unity in the new Assembly and the reported formation by the Islamist bloc of a wider "conservative block" with non-Islamist MPs.

Most papers report growing anticipation that de-facto head of government Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad will be tapped by the Amir on July 11 to be the new prime minister, replacing ailing Crown Prince Sheikh Saad. Several commentators say that effective government headed by a strong prime minister is needed to overcome what one terms "the state of confusion, stagnation and slump suffered by Kuwait over the past few years."

Allegations of vote buying appear in several editorials, along with criticism of Kuwait's democracy as "unrepresentative." END SUMMARY.

1. News Stories: All newspapers continue to analyze and interpret the election results. Defeated incumbent and liberal Ahmed Al-Rubie refutes claims that the new assembly is an "Islamic parliament," while defeated incumbent and Islamist, Mubarak Al-Duwaila, denies that the new assembly is pro-government. Al-Seeyasah reports on July 8 that Kuwaitis have rejected the Islamist movements and "defeated their plan of Islamization of Kuwait."

In the July 8 edition of Al-Seyassah, editor-in-chief Ahmed Al-Jarallah stated that interpreting the election results as a victory for "radical extremists," as he says was reported in the foreign media, is "entirely incorrect." Al-Jarallah describes the Islamists in the new parliament as "moderate," and posing no threat to U.S.-Kuwait relations.

Conservative Salafi MP, Dr. Waleed Al-Tabtabie stated that the Islamic block had improved its position with the elections because most of its new MPs are independent Islamists rather than associated with one of the two main Islamist movements (the Salafis and the Islamic Constitutional Movement) which will make it easy for them cooperate with MPs of other political groups.

On July 8, the spokesman of the Islamist Salafi movement, Turki Al-Zafiri, warned against disunity among Islamists in the National Assembly, and called on coordination between Islamists to confront the pro-government block in the assembly, Al-Rai Al-Aam reports.

Al-Watan reports that Islamic block members agreed on July 8 to open membership to non-Islamists, thereby creating a "conservative block."

Most papers predict that the Amiri decree commissioning the formation of the new government will be issued either on July 9 or 11. Editor-in-chief of Al-Qabas, Waleed Al-Nesf, called on the Kuwaiti leadership to make decisive decisions without delay, saying, "those who call for more time before making a decision are also calling for more disunion and separation."

Most newspapers interpret the meeting of Acting Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmed on July 8 with former ministers and MPs as a sign that Sheikh Sabah will be commissioned to form the new government. Speculation continues over whether he will do so in his capacity as Acting Prime Minister or as Prime Minister, the position nominally held by Crown Prince Sheikh Saad. Al-Qabas and Al-Seyassa learned from informed sources that four former speakers of parliament advised the Amir to separate the posts of Crown Prince and Prime Minister.

Al-Rai Al-Aam reports the composition of the new Council of Ministers will include four returning ministers from the royal family and four other ministers that held portfolios in the last government.

#### Editorials:

13. "Confusion Bred By An Assembly Lacking Vision"  
Liberal Salwa Al-Saeed wrote in independent Al-Seyassah (7/8): "An analysis of the results of the election indicates that the many unresolved issues in parliament will remain unresolved, and that the parliament will hinder progress on many issues related to the changes occurring in the region. A specific example is an [Islamic Constitutional Movement] MP who incited people against reform policies by arguing that the 2003 National Assembly would focus on granting women political rights, exploiting oil fields, normalizing relations with Israel and waging war against Islamists under the pretext of fighting terrorism. A National Assembly with such MPs would undoubtedly sacrifice national interests for their own individual interests and lead Kuwait to turn against the current of change in the world and into direct confrontation with its allies."

14. "Where Does Reform Begin?"  
Prominent liberal lawyer Hassan Al-Essa wrote in independent Al-Qabas (7/8): "This National Assembly will be worse than its predecessor. This Assembly perpetuates the priority given to tribal affiliations over national loyalties. The Kuwaiti people have not grasped the changes that have occurred, and will still occur, in the region. The American Ambassador's message on the Fourth of July fell on deaf ears. It is not true that youths voted for change. Instead, they voted for backwardness and tradition. The youths voted as if they were the elderly when they voted for conservatism and extremist forces representing Bin Laden's comrades and his sympathizers. It was not only the liberals who lost during the elections, but also the moderate Islamists."

15. "The Complexity of the Islamic Movements in Kuwait"  
Pro-Islamist Dr. Haifa Al-Sanousi wrote in independent Al-Rai Al-Aam (7/8): "The Islamic movements are too busy fighting amongst themselves, and this is weakening their collective efforts to unite and protect Sharia law. There is no doubt that we are in need of a serious initiative that seeks to unify all Islamic movements and to coordinate on issues pertaining to the Quran. Regrettably, the Islamic movements lack harmony due to contrasting ideologies. The unintentional blend of the concepts of religion and politics may inadvertently sanction some liberals to circulate their own sick theories."

16. "The Knights"  
Liberal Bader Sultan Al-Essa wrote in independent Al-Seyassah (7/8): "Those who did not vote for [prominent liberal incumbent] MP Al-Neibari will soon realize that they have relinquished Kuwait's national interests in return for a hearty meal or promises of a job. With the defeat of [five leading liberal] candidates, democracy has lost strong men who stood up against administrative and financial corruption. [T]hey were disposed of in a way that appeared to be democratic, but in reality was closer to bribery and vote-buying."

17. "Virtues of Democracy"  
Saleh Al-Shayji wrote in independent Al-Anba (7/8): "We have heard and seen for ourselves how the 'democrats' enslaved their followers and electorates. Some of them bought off their followers with their own money, and in some cases, used money from other sources. In this light, [democracy] is a game of frivolity, which enslaves the free, and brings to power people who do not deserve the right to be the masters of the nation."

18. "To the New Prime Minister, With Regards"  
Liberal former MP Ahmed Al-Rubei wrote in independent Al-Qabas (7/8): "An Amiri decree will be issued in the next few days commissioning a new Prime Minister. Our hope is that he would be a genuine leader for the Ministers. We also hope to see an end to the role of 'acting' Prime Minister, something which has exhausted the political process."

19. "The Prime Minister in Charge"  
Liberal former Secretary General of the Kuwait Democratic Forum, Ahmed Al-Dayeen, wrote in independent Al-Rai Al-Aam (7/8): "If the new Prime Minister has serious intentions to implement reforms, and a real ambition to avoid the state of confusion, stagnation and slump suffered by Kuwait over the past few years, then he must seek to establish a coherent ministerial group and not a mix of discordant elements."

10. "Is This the Will of the Nation?"  
Dr. Yaser Al-Saleh wrote in independent Al-Rai Al-Aam (7/8): "The National Assembly represents only thirteen percent of all Kuwaitis. The National Assembly is comprised of some deputies who support the will of those in power, and were

imposed on the assembly just to receive illegal benefits from the system. In addition, one third of the National Assembly is comprised of ministers who are forced to vote in support of government decisions. Can we still consider the Kuwaiti National Assembly a representative of the people's will and a true determiner of this country?"

JONES